



Weiss

for Guitar

Ten arrangements by
Peter Batchelar & Richard Wright

The Associated Board of
the Royal Schools of Music

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Introduction

Silvius Leopold Weiss was born in Grottkau (now Grodków), Silesia in 1687. He started playing the lute at a young age and took lessons from his father. In 1710, like Handel and many other German musicians, he travelled to Italy, where he spent four years in Rome in the service of the Polish Prince Alexander Sobieski. The prince's mother, Maria Casimira, who also held court in Rome, engaged Alessandro Scarlatti and then (in 1709) his son Domenico as her composer and music director. Weiss played continuo in operas and would certainly have worked with the Scarlattis and heard the music of Corelli and Vivaldi. On the death of Prince Sobieski in 1714, Weiss returned to Germany, taking a position in Kassel. In 1718 he was appointed to the court of the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony in Dresden, where he became the highest paid instrumentalist. He held this post until his death in 1750. In 1718, also, he gave a series of weekly concerts in London and even played for King George I, but in 1722 suffered a career-threatening injury when a French violinist called Petit tried to bite off the tip of his right thumb. He had 11 children, of whom 7 survived him.

As a musician, Weiss enjoyed a similar status to J. S. Bach: they were almost the same age, they were renowned improvisers and unrivalled masters of lute and keyboard respectively, and they were exemplary composers for their instruments. Weiss visited Bach in 1739, in Leipzig, though the two probably met earlier during one of Bach's many visits to his son Wilhelm Friedemann, another employee of the Dresden court. According to an anonymous contemporary

account of one of their meetings, 'whoever knows the difficulty of playing harmonic modulations and good counterpoint on the lute will be astounded and scarcely believe when eyewitnesses assure us that the great Dresden lutenist Weiss competed in playing fantasias and fugues with Sebastian Bach'. Bach too must have admired Weiss's abilities since he arranged his suite No. 47 as a duo for violin and harpsichord (BWV 1025).

Weiss stands alongside Francesco da Milano and John Dowland – the two outstanding figures of the Renaissance lute – as one of the greatest players of all time. Ernst Gottlieb Baron, a younger contemporary of Weiss, describes the 'Weissian method' of playing with reference to the composer's masterly fingerings and ability to play a cantabile line above a clearly defined bass. In about 1717 Weiss was responsible for the addition of two extra pairs of bass strings, making 13 in all, and around 1732 he had the bass strings mounted onto a second peg-box, which gave the bass extra power and resonance.

Despite constituting the largest body of work in the lute's history, the music of Weiss is only today being afforded its true status. Had it not been written for what became an obsolete instrument, it would surely have achieved this status much sooner. Like Bach's music, it is a typically German synthesis of 17th-century French and Italian influences. The French elements are primarily the dance forms, unbarred preludes and certain motifs, while the Italian influences (occurring more in later compositions) are the strong

harmonic progressions, robust architecture, sequences and driving rhythms. Though not as intricately contrapuntal as Bach's, the music is nevertheless harmonically sophisticated, involving skilful modulation to remote keys, particularly in the late works.



The present collection

The majority of Weiss's 850 or so surviving works are in six-movement suites (or *suonaten* as he called them), the most common sequence being *allemande*, *courante*, *bourrée*, *sarabande*, *menuet* and *gigue*. This collection includes an example of each movement-type with the exception of an *allemande*, and the pieces are presented in approximate order of technical difficulty.

Many of the suites open with a prelude or fantasia, which would originally have been improvised. When written down, this was deliberately left unbarred. To suggest flexibility within the tempo, therefore, the present Prelude carries a range of metronome marks.

The S-C (Smith-Crawford) numbers under the individual titles refer to suite and movement respectively. This catalogue system was developed for D. A. Smith, ed., *Silvius Leopold Weiss: Sämtliche Werke für Laute in Tabulatur und Übertragung* [Complete works for lute in tablature and transcription], vols. i-iv (Frankfurt, 1983-90); and T. Crawford, ed., *ibid.*, vols. v-x (Kassel, 2003-). The two parts to this complete edition represent the so-called London and Dresden

manuscripts held at the British Library and Sächsische Landesbibliothek respectively. Of the present pieces, eight are among the early and middle period works forming the London manuscript, and two – the Prelude and Paysane – are among the Dresden manuscript's later works. In the course of arranging these pieces, seven were transposed. The original keys are: Menuet, D minor; Gavotte, D minor; Menuet, D major; Rondeau, C minor; Bourrée, B♭ major; Paysane, A minor; and Courante, F minor.

The ornaments signs are the stave-notation equivalents of symbols found in Baroque lute tablature. The most common of these were the , an ornament starting on the upper note; and the , one that starts on the lower note. These were played as either an *appoggiatura* or, depending on the context, a trill. Both types occur in bar 2 of the *Sarabande*, for example, while in bar 4 the upper-note sign has been interpreted as a trill. In the case of *appoggiaturas*, the small notes subtract their value from the note they precede – in other words, they should be played according to their written value. A solid slur indicates both notes are to be played with the right hand; a dashed line means a left-hand slur is intended. The 'crushed' grace-note, as found in the *Bourrée* and *Paysane*, is played simultaneously on the adjacent string to its main note, to create an expressive dissonance.

Peter Batchelar & Richard Wright, 2008

Prelude

S-C 34/1

(♩ = c.50-58)

②

1

⑥=D

②

②

③

CIII

QIII

CI

④

CV

②

mi p

i m a

CI CV CIII

1 3 1 4 4

CI

a m i p m a i i a m

Menuet

S-C 13/5

(♩ = c.104)

2 CII CII

1. 2.

6 CII *i a i*

9 *i* CII *a m i a i*

14 CII *m a*

19 *a m a* *m* *p* *p*

24 *i* CII

Gavotte

S-C 14

(♩ = c.58)

3

4

♯II

8

a i

Fine

12

♯CI

16

a m

20

m a i

D.C. al Fine

Menuet

S-C 18/5

(♩ = c.108)

Musical score for Menuet S-C 18/5, measures 1-43. The score is written in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, m, a), articulation (accents, slurs), and fingering (numbers 1-4, 0). The score is divided into measures 1-6, 7-11, 12-17, 18-23, 24-30, 31-36, 37-42, and 43. Roman numerals CIII, CIV, and CI are placed above the staff at measures 3, 12, and 31 respectively. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at measure 43.

Rondeau

S-C 27/4

(♩. = c. 63)

5 *3*

6 *CIII* *a i m i a* *a i m i*

12 *a* *m*

19 *2* *3* *Fine*

25

31 *2*

38

45 *CIII* *4* *4* *2*

52 *m* *i* *D.C. al Fine*

Sarabande

S-C 2/5

(♩ = c.50)

6 $\text{⑥} = \text{D}$ ΦII m i a m a i m (a) tr

5 ΦIV m a m i a m

10 i m a m i m i (b) tr

14 ΦII

19 ΦII ΦII ΦII

24 i m ② m ③

29 (c) tr i m ③ tr

(a) (b) (c)

Bourrée

S-C 23/3

(♩ = c.84)

7 *a* *m* CIII—

5 3 0 1 2 4 CIII—

9 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1

14 4 4 2 2 4 *m*

19 *a* ③ *m* *p* *a*

24 4 1

28

CIII

33

a m i

37

a m CII

42

a m a

46

② CIII

51

CIII a m

56

m i p

Paysane

S-C 29/7

(♩ = c.80)

8

6

11

16

21

26 *a m i a m i* CII

32 CII CVII CII

37 CII

42

47 *m a*

52 CII

Courante

S-C 21/2

(♩ = c.138)

9 *m i a* *m i p i* *a i* *p* *m*

6 *i m p i* *p p* *m p*

12 *m a* *a i p* *a m i* *a i p*

18 *a i m* *a a m i* *a m i*

24 *i* *i m a m* *m a* *i p i* *p p*

29 *p i a* *a* *CII*

35 *CII* *m* *p m p a m*

m i a *p i* *m i m* *P i*

⑥=D

46 *i* *i p i* *m* *a m*

52 *a i a* *a i* *a p p i m p*

58 *a* *m a* *CI* *m a*

65 *m* *i a m* *p i* *m a*

71 *ΦII* *a* *a i* *m i*

77 *ΦIII* *m i a* *a* *m i a* *m* *a* *i*

83 *a m i a* *m* *m* *a m p m*

89 *m*

95 *② a i m* *m* *p m p a*

Giga

S-C2/7

(♩ = c.92)

10 *p m i p m i* *p p p* *i a m*
⑥=D

5 *i* *m* *CII* *CII* *a*

10 *m* *a* *m* *i* *a* *m* *a* *i* *i* *a*
④

15 *m* *a* *i* *a* *CVII* *CVII*

20 *CIX* *CII*

26 *i m a* *m i p m i* *CI* *CI*

32 *i a m* *i* *a m* *i a m*

37 *i* *a m* *i a m* *i* *m* *CII*

42 *a m* *m* *a m i p i m* *a m*

47 *p i a* *m* *p a i* *m* *p m i* *a i* *p m a* CII

52 CII ③

58 ③ ② CV CII

64 *i* CII

69 CII *m* *i* *a* *m* *i* *a* *i*

74 CII CV *a i m*

79 ③ *m i p p* *p p p*